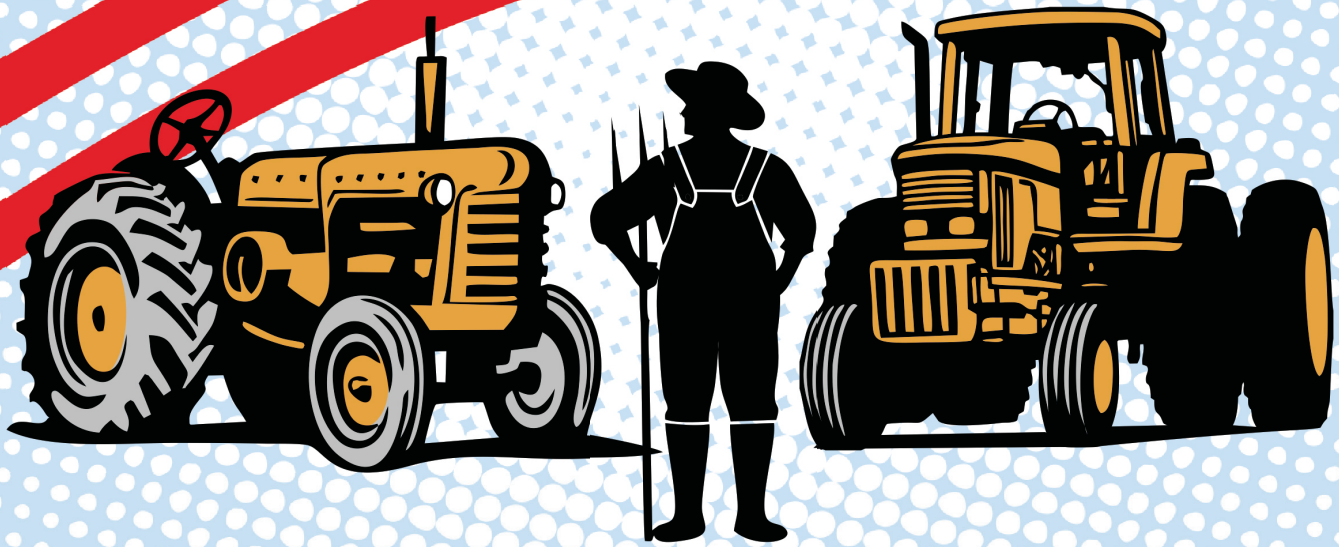
2017 SUMPTER Country Fest



We're Still Country

EST. 1986

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Welcome to Sumpter Township

Kim Toms

Sumpter Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman Kim Toms is rightfully proud of the events planned for the 32nd Annual Sumpter Country Fest this year.

As usual, the festival will take place at the Sumpter Fairgrounds, located at Sumpter and Dunn roads. The theme this year for the Memorial Day weekend festival is We're Still Country and events will include attractions that have been bringing crowds to the township for more than three decades.

Toms said the entertainment brings crowds to hear live music all weekend, along with food vendors, the popular cutest baby contest, a quilt raffle, the traditional car show and a crafts market.

"As chairman of the Sumpter Country Festival, and on behalf of the Sumpter Parks and Recreation Commission, I would like to welcome everyone to the 2017 Annual Sumpter Country Fest. We have many dedicated volunteers, who have put in countless hours to bring an affordable and fun family event to the community. Through the support of the Sumpter Township Board of Trustees and township departments, citizens and sponsors, we've put together an exciting line-up of events this year," Toms said.

Toms promised there would be something for everyone at the event which annually draws an estimated 10,000 people.

Days and times of events can be found on the full schedule of events on pages 8 and 9.

"Some of our activities will include the Schmidt's Amusements Carnival, fireworks, U.S.A. Demolition Derby, pony pulls, children's entertainment, tribute artists, bands, beer tent, pony rides and bingo," he said.

"I would like to thank the community and sponsors for their continued support and encouragement. Many thanks also to the wonderful, dedicated volunteers who have put in countless hours to bring an affordable and fun, family event to the community.

"Come and join us in the fun," Toms concluded.

Congratulations

Members of the Sumpter Township Board of Trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parks and Recreation Department and the many volunteers for organizing the 2017 Annual Sumpter Fest. This event has become a mainstay and an important source of entertainment and fun for not only Sumpter Township but for the entire area. For the last week in May, this township board, Supervisor John W. Morgan; Clerk Clarence Hoffman, Jr., Treasurer Peggy Morgan and Trustees Esther Hurst, Don LaPorte, Matt Oddy and Don Swinson, join hands with the Parks and Recreation Department and our entire community in making Sumpter Township the entertainment capital of the world.

SUMPTER
Country Fest
MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND
COMMUNITY CENTER GROUNDS • SUMPTER & DUNN RDS
5 MILES SOUTH OF BELLEVILLE
• BANDS • CARNIVAL • BINGO
• CRAFTS • FIREWORKS
• ARENA EVENTS
SCHEDULE INFORMATION 734-461-6201
SPONSORED BY SUMPTER PARKS AND RECREATION

A job well done

Members of the Sumpter Township Parks and Recreation Commission work all year to provide wholesome activities for families. The volunteers gathered for a photo recently including, from left, front row, Board of Trustees Liaison Don Swinson; Co-chairman Holly Swinson; Treasurer Dru Allen; Selena Swinson and Chairperson Kim Toms. In the second row are Margaret Rochon, Secretary Jennifer Price; Virginia Belinski, Joanne Posegay, Jim Posegay and Sharon Pokerwinski. In the back row, from left, are Jim Chudzinski, Jay Bardell, Karithea Murry Hannible, Cheryl Toms and Richard Pokerwinski. Volunteers not pictured are Yavetta Mills, Kevin Rochon, Becky LaPalme, Danny Jones, Mary Carter, Esther Hurst and Anna Bellamy. The Sumpter Township Parks and Recreation Commission is a volunteer group sponsored by the Sumpter Township Board of Trustees. They volunteer their time to provide wholesome activities throughout the year for families within the township. Each member takes the Mission Statement of the commission very seriously and every event is designed to adhere to those guiding principles. "It is the mission and direction of the Parks & Recreation Commission to provide an environment that is appropriate for the recreational activities that occur within all of the public parks and facilities of Sumpter Township, to establish and set in place the rules and regulations that will ensure a safe and enjoyable recreational experience, to encourage the effective use of all the parks and recreational facilities within Sumpter Township, and to provide all citizens of the Township programs that focus on enhancing the quality of life in Sumpter Township." Events organized by the Sumpter Township Parks and Recreation Commission include: Children's Easter Egg Hunt; Sumpter Country Fest; Family Fun Day in July; Car Show & Demolition Derby in September; Turkey Shoot on Sundays in October and the annual Children's Christmas Party For more information about the commission or the events, contact Sumpter Township Hall, (734) 461-6201 or Chairman Kim Toms, (734) 697-3963.

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A 'grand' marshal

Zywcki family has deep roots in Sumpter Township

The Grand Marshal of the Sumpter Fest this year has deep roots in the community.

From the time John and Helen Zywicki bought their 52-acre farm on Willow Road in Sumpter Township in 1944, their family has been a growing part of the community.

The couple moved to Sumpter in 1944 from a farm in Romulus and grew vegetables to sell at Western Market in Detroit and at some local farm vegetable stands during their first years on their rambling land.

In the late 40s, Zywicki built the first greenhouse on his land, a 20-foot by 40-foot structure heated from the coal furnace in the farmhouse. The couple grew seedling vegetable plants for their fields in the greenhouse to get a start on the growing season and their success prompted other area farmers to ask if the Zywickis could grow starter plants for them. During these years, John Zywicki was working in the shipyards in Detroit during the winter months and his wife helped her sister and brother-in-law, Irene and Joe Pinter, with their greenhouse work.

> *The couple moved to Sumpter in 1944 from a farm in Romulus...*

The greenhouse business began to show real growth and in addition to the starter plants for neighboring farmers, the couple began to grow some flowers which they took, along with vegetable plants, to the Western and Eastern markets in Detroit on Saturdays. All this as the couple raised their five sons, John, Raymond, Charles, Gerald and Donald, all of whom helped on the farm and in the greenhouse business.

In the 60s, a severe hailstorm damaged the field crops and the couple opted to stop using the land for crops, but did opt to purchase 20 more acres of land from their neighbors.

See **Marshal,** page 4

BARBARA ROGALLE MILLER
ATTORNEY AT LAW

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Marshal, from page 3

The couple and their sons witnessed some big changes during the 60s which eventually impacted their business. Willow Road was paved, Bessie Hoffman Elementary School was constructed and city water pipes were installed along Willow Road.

A family member no longer had to ride a bike to a neighbor's home to pick up mail when the first mailboxes were installed along the road.

The business was incorporated in 1976 the family continued to operate their greenhouse business. When their father died in 1987, Gerald and Donald continued to operate the business until Donald and Carol bought the operation from the family in 1997. Gerald opted to retire only two years later in 1999, but the family, including Helen Zywicki, who died in 2016, continued to maintain the business which was flourishing.

> *Today, fourth generation members of the family work at the greenhouse which has become an integral part of the Sumpter Township community.*

The family opened a retail store in 1999 where today they have more than 250,000 square feet of greenhouse space where they ship plants across Michigan. The family continues to take their plants to Eastern market on Saturdays.

Both Donald and Carol Zywicki retired last year but continue to help the family during the busy times of the year. Their four children, John, Tracy, Donald, Jr. and Joseph Zywicki, are slowly taking over the reins at the business, helped by Tracy's husband, Edzon Vazquez.

A cousin, Scott Zywicki, who has worked at the greenhouses since he was a child is also involved in the operation along with nieces, nephews and grandchildren who have worked at the business during the more than 73 years since John and Helen moved to their farm.

Today, fourth generation members of the family work at the greenhouse which has become an integral part of the Sumpter Township community.

The committee members were unanimous in choosing the family at Zywicki Greenhouses as the Grand Marshal of the Sumpter Country Fest this year.

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Members of the Zywicki family, some fourth generation, continue to operate the business founded in the late 1940s by John and Helen Zywicki. The family has been unanimously chosen as the Grand Marshal of the Sumpter Country Fest this year.

National Strawberry Festival Belleville, MI

Belleville National Strawberry Festival

In June on
Father's Day Weekend
Friday • Saturday • Sunday

Executive Director: Joan Bodnar
Vendor Coordinator: Sharon Pokerwinski

nationalstrawberryfest.com

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June 16, 17, 18, 2017
Downtown

FARMERS MARKET
June - September
2nd & 4th Mondays
4th Street Square

TASTE OF BELLEVILLE
August 17, 2017
Horizon Park

HARVEST FEST
October 14, 2017
4th Street

BOOVILLE
October, 2017

HALLOWEEN
October 31, 2017

PHOTOS WITH SANTA
December 9 and
December 16, 2017
Belleville Area Museum

FLOP-E-BUNNY
March 31, 2018
Victory Park

In memoriam

Former treasurer, commission member will be missed

As the 32nd Annual Sumpter Fest takes place May 26 through 29 this year, there will be one face noticeably absent from the crowds.

Former Sumpter Township Treasurer Alan Bates, 73, who was also a valued member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, died Dec. 24, 2016. Mr. Bates was an active member of the commission and the parks and recreation department and was very involved in the planning and organization of the annual festival.

Mr. Bates was the president of the Alan Bates Building Co. in Sumpter and served as treasurer of the township after spending many years involved in the management of the community.

He was born June 30, 1943, the son of Albert and Mariam Bates, and was raised in Dearborn Heights, moving to Sumpter where he founded and operated his business.

Mr. Bates was known for his love of the community and the Parks and Recreation Department had a special place in his heart. He served as the parks administrator for the township and was successful in applying for and receiving grants to improve the recreational parks in Sumpter.

Mr. Bates had never married, but is survived by his special "family" including Chris (Lori) DeMond of Belleville. He was also proud "Papa Alan" to James DeMond and his family.

He was preceded in death by his parents and a cousin, Rosemary Johnson.

Alan Darryl Bates

His death was mourned by the entire Sumpter Township community and his absence will be felt deeply during the annual festival this year.

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Website fmar1.org

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Sumpter supervisor extends welcome

On behalf of the Sumpter Township Board of Trustees and all of its employees, volunteers and certainly all of its citizens, we welcome you to the annual Sumpter Country Fest. This year the festivities begin Friday, May 26 and continue through Monday, May 29. Please join us as friends and neighbors gather for fun and entertainment as we celebrate the greatest place on Earth to live, Sumpter Township.

John W. Morgan
Sumpter Township Supervisor

Township seniors' programs continue throughout year

The Sumpter Senior Center provides multiple services and activities for township senior citizens. Among the many services provided is transportation to the center, where seniors can enjoy socialization, recreation and educational programs.

Lunch is served at the center Monday through Friday for a nominal donation of $3 and those who may need transportation can call (734) 461-9373 to arrange a ride to the center.

Home-delivered nutrition and TEFAP are also available to qualifying individuals through the Sumpter Senior Center.

Transportation is also available at no cost to local shopping centers for members and to and from the Senior Center for the nutrition program and even other activities such as low-cost trips.

The center offers exercise equipment and a computer lab, along with Arthritis Foundation exercise classes and a sewing room.

Annual membership is $8 for Sumpter Township residents and $9 for seniors who live outside the township.

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2017 SUMPTER Country Fest
We're Still Country EST. 1986

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MAY 26 - MAY 29, 2017

Thursday, May 25

Carnival Opens	5 p.m. - Close

Friday, May 26

Festival Opens at 5 p.m.- Closes at Midnight

Carnival Opens/Beer Tent	5 p.m. - Close
Raffle Tickets Available	5 p.m. - Close
Live Music -The Detroit Drive	4 - 7 p.m.
PNC Grow Up Great Mobile Learning Adventure	4 - 7 p.m.
Baby Contest	5 - 8 p.m.
Bingo	5 p.m. - Close
Silent Auction	5 p.m. - Close
Live Music - Denise Davis and the Motor City Sensations Band	8 p.m. - Close

Saturday, May 27

Festival Opens at Noon - Closes at Midnight

Carnival Opens/Beer Tent	Noon - Close
Raffle Tickets Available	Noon - Close
Parade *(From Sumpter and Judd roads to Dunn Road)* ***To be announced by Randy Brown***	Noon
Bingo	Noon -10 p.m.
Baby Contest	Noon - 8 p.m.
Pop Up Story Time - Belleville Area District Library	1 - 4 p.m.
Parade presentations immediately following parade	1:30 p.m.
Michigan Mini Horse Pulling	1:30 p.m.
Silent Auction	2 - 10 p.m.
Tribute To The Legends (Impersonators)	2 p.m. - Close
Animal Magic	2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

2017 SUMPTER Country Fest

We're Still Country EST. 1986

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MAY 26 - MAY 29, 2017

Sunday, May 28

Festival Opens at Noon - Closes at Midnight

Car Show (10am Registration)	Noon - 4 p.m.
Carnival Opens/Beer Tent	Noon - Close
Raffle Tickets Available	Noon - Close
Baby Contest	Noon - 9 p.m.
Bingo	Noon - 10 p.m.
Silent Auction	Noon - 10 p.m.
Live Music - The Detroit Drive	1 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Truck Demolition Derby (Arena)	5:30 p.m.
(Adults $12/Children 12 and under $4)	
Live Music -TJ Thomas and the Kentucky Strait Band	7 p.m. - Close
Fire Works - Music provided by Steve Jones	Dusk

Monday, May 29

Festival Opens at Noon- Close 10 p.m.

Carnival Opens/Beer Tent	Noon - Close
Live Music -	1 - 5 p.m.
Baby Contest	Noon - 5 p.m.
Raffle Tickets Available	Noon - 5 p.m
Bingo	Noon - Close
PNC Grow Up Great Mobile Learning Adventure (MLA)	Noon - 6 p.m.
Silent Auction Final Bid	5 p.m.
Baby Contest Awards & Raffle Winners Announced	5:30 p.m.
Silent Auction Items Picked Up	6 - 8 p.m.
Auto-Cross/Demolition Derby (Arena)	6 p.m.
(Adults $12/Children 12 and under $4)	
Live Music - Yankee Trash Band	6 p.m. - Close

Baby Contest - Friday, May 26 through Monday, May 29
(Ends at 1:30 p.m. Winners Announced 5 p.m.)
Silent Auction - Friday, May 26 through Monday, May 29
(Last bid 5 p.m. pick-up items 6-8 p.m.)
Crafters and Vendors - All day Friday, May 26 through Monday, May 29
PNC Grow Up Great Mobile Learning Adventure (MLA)
Friday, May 26 4-7 p.m. and Monday, May 29 Noon-6 p.m.
Pop Up Story Time - Belleville Area District Library Saturday, May 27 1 -4 p.m.
Animal Magic - Saturday, May 27th at 2pm & 4pm

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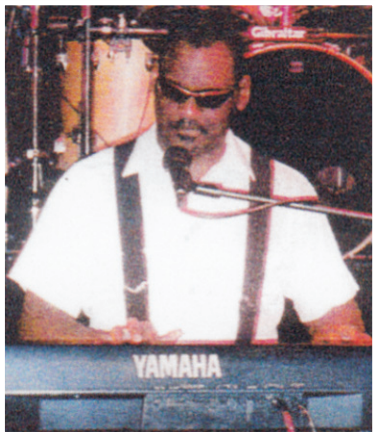
2017 SUMPTER COUNTRY FEST MAY 26-29

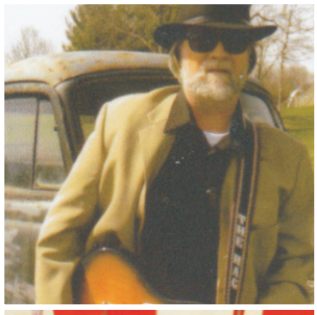
Township Festival Grounds 23501 Sumpter Road. Belleville MI 48111 (734-461-6201)

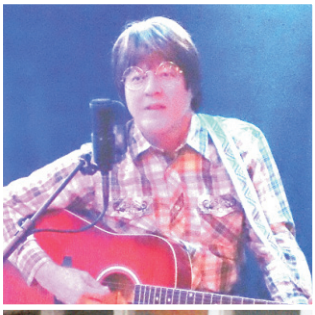
IMPERSONATORS / TRIBUTE ARTISTS
SCHEDULE FOR SATURDAY MAY 27

2 p.m. - Midnight
Program emceed by JIMMIE JAMES (James Naumoff)
Station WPON/WCXI 1160 AM
CD Sound System coordinated by Ryan Clukey

2 - 2:45 p.m.	TRAY CHARLES/CHARILIE PRIDE – Tyrone Hamilton
3 - 3:45 p.m.	BARBRA STREISAND – Sheryl Moutard
4 - 4:45 p.m.	MERLE HAGGARD – Jeff Carr
5 - 5:45 p.m.	LORETTA LYNN/TAMMY WYNETTE – Bernie Walters
6 - 6:45 p.m.	JOHN DENVER – Jim Walters
7 - 7:45 p.m.	PATSY CLINE – Kathy Bressler
8 - 8:45 p.m.	ELVIS – Sherman Arnold
9 - 9:45 p.m.	JERRY LEE LEWIS – Don Grant
10 - 10:45 p.m.	ALAN JACKSON – Charlie Nova
11 - 11:45 p.m.	SOUTHERN HEAT BAND – Tina Watts







Honored citizens

Commission recognizes couple's decades of volunteer service

They are the busiest "retired" people in the community.

Richard and Sharon Pokerwinski have been chosen by the Sumpter Township Parks and Recreation Commission as the official Honorary Citizens for the 2017 Sumpter Country Fest in recognition of the extraordinary involvement of the couple in their community.

The couple, who marked their 50th wedding anniversary at a renewal of their vows last year, has lived their entire married life at their Karr Road home. Richard Pokerwinski is a life-long Sumpter Township resident and a 1964 graduate of Belleville High School. He was honored by the school district as one of the Van Buren School District Distinguished graduates.

Sharon Pokerwinski is a 1966 graduate of Roosevelt High School in Wyandotte, where she was born and raised.

The couple met on a blind date, Pokerwinski said, in 1965 and were married July 16 the next year, just weeks after Sharon's high school graduation in May. Richard Pokerwinski's parents, Raymond and Mary, who had moved to Sumpter from Detroit in 1935, gave the couple the Karr Road acreage as a wedding present.

The young couple built their home on the property where they still reside and where they raised their two grown children, "who are the center of our lives," Sharon Pokerwinski said.

Their son Richard (Rick) and his wife, Jessica, live in Phoenix, AZ and their daughter, Amy, and her husband, Greg DeClercq, have two children, Bailey, 13 and Preston, 5. The family resides close by in Milan.

Richard Pokerwinski's first job was working on Howard Gretes' farm on Wear Road in Sumpter. Then he went to work for Ford Motor Co. where he was a UAW Local 845 union representative for 35 years and also served on the Emergency Response Team at the Sheldon Road Plant. He served as the Employee Support Service Program representative for 25 years before his retirement in August of 2005 after more than 41 years at Ford Motor Co.

Richard and Sharon Pokerwinski

His wife retired from the Michigan Institute of Aviation and Technology (MIAT) in February of 2013. She also served as the secretary of the Michigan Festival and Events organization for nearly seven years.

The couple, long-time members of St. Anthony Catholic Church, have been involved in the Belleville and Sumpter

See **Citizens,** page 12

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Citizens from page 11

communities for many years. Sharon Pokerwinski was a member of the parish council for 13 years and is a Eucharistic Minister.

When their children were younger, the couple was involved with the St. Anthony Cub Scouts where Sharon served as a Scout Leader; Boy Scouts; Girl Scouts, when Sharon was an Assistant Troop Leader; St. Anthony School; Belleville High School swimming teams and the track and cross country teams.

The couple was involved with beginning the original Strawberry Festival at St. Anthony's Church in 1977. They are still deeply involved with what has become the Belleville National Strawberry Festival and have served as respective chairpersons of the St. Anthony Strawberry Festival since 2003 and have been involved in the Belleville National Strawberry Festival since 2001. Sharon Pokerwinski has served as the official secretary of the event since 2003 and is currently the Parks Administrator.

Both Richard and Sharon have been involved in the Sumpter Township Parks and Recreation Commission where Sharon served as secretary for 14 years. She recently resigned from that position but is still very involved in helping the commission and volunteering her help.

Richard has been a member of the Environmental Commission representing Sumpter Township and has served as a township trustee. He is currently a member of the Sumpter Township Planning Commission. He has served on the board of directors of Parkside Credit Union for 20 years, having served as director and past secretary.

When not volunteering to help their church and their community, the couple finds time to enjoy hobbies.

Richard restores old vehicles after stripping them down to the very basics and rebuilding them. He has been working on cars for more than 50 years and still has the very first car he ever owned, 1955 Chevrolet Bel-Aire hardtop he received as a graduation gift.

Honored Citizens Richard and Sharon Pokerwinski have been taking grandson Preston, now 5, to car shows for several years to view his grandpa's winning entries. The couple is actively involved in the America's Most Wanted Car Club and helps organize and manage the Wayne County Fair Car Show in August.

His involvement with the Autorama Car Show at Cobo Hall each year and various car clubs, including Sparkplugs Car Club of South Lyon and America's Most Wanted Car Club of Canton Township, have been featured in newspaper stories.

He first entered into the 53rd Annual Detroit Autorama Car Show through the Michigan Hot Rod Association with his 1940 Ford panel street rod and won first place. In other years of the Autorama, he has taken 2nd place with his 1939 Ford panel truck, which he sold at the Autorama that year, and 3rd place with the 1955 Chevy Bel-Aire hardtop. Richard and Sharon were both actively involved in a car show during the Canton Liberty Fest through the America's Most Wanted Car Club. Funds generated from that event were donated to various charities.

The couple is also actively involved in hosting a car show for the Wayne County Fair Association during the Wayne County Fair. They have helped organize and manage the show each August for the past 6 years.

Both Richard and Sharon said they were exceptionally surprised when they were chosen to be the Sumpter Country Fest Honorary Citizens for 2017,

"We want to thank the Sumpter Township Parks and Recreation Commission for this honor. We have really enjoyed our involvement in the festival each year and the friendships we have made with so many people all these years," Sharon Pokerwinski said.

Lighting up the sky

Carleton Farms/Republic Services sponsor festival fireworks

The Carleton Farms Landfill in Sumpter Township, owned and operated by Republic Waste Services once again has sponsored the fireworks display at the Sumpter Country Fest.

Carleton Farms, which began with a 4.0 megawatt landfill gas-to-energy plant in in July of 1998 now produces 6.4 megawatts of electrical power at the farm. The electrical power generated at the plant is transported 1.5 miles and tied into the Detroit Edison distribution grid. It provides sufficient electricity to power more than 7,000 homes and businesses in the greater Detroit Metropolitan area. The facility will eventually expand to produce 12 megawatts of power and will become the largest internal combustion landfill gas plant in Michigan.

The 640-acre landfill first opened in Sumpter Township in 1993. The landfill includes more than 90 collection wells in place delivering more than 3.4 cubic feet of landfill gas each day.

Carleton Farms is located at 28800 Clark Road in New Boston.

Republic Services offices are located on Van Born Road in Wayne. For more information about the commercial and residential hauling and collection services, call (734) 641-3555.

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USA Demolition Derby Inc.
USA Demolition Derby
Invades
Sumpter Country Festival
Sunday, May 28th at 5:30 p.m.
— AutoCross & Pick up Truck Demolition Derby Heat —
Monday, May 29th at 6:00 p.m.
— AutoCross - Burn Out Contest - Car Demolition Derby —

Mini Horse pull returns to festival this year

Returning for a second appearance at the Sumpter Country Fest this year is the Horse Pulling event which debuted at the festival last year.

The event proved so popular last year, organizers said, that the Michigan Mini Horse Pulling Association was invited to return and seemed to exemplify the "We're Still Country" theme this year. The Horse Pulling competitions will begin at 1:30 p.m. Saturday this year and feature mini-horses who compete in pulling weights for distances to win the match.

The horses, which are divided into two classifications, 34-inch or 38-inch minis, work in teams during the event. The teams pull a sled or stone boat a total distance of 9 feet. Boundaries on each side of the lane keep the pull within a 12-feet boundary and the team cannot step over the boundary rope or is considered an attempt at the pull. Each team is allowed three attempts on each of three trials for each load.

If the team does not pull the sled the full 9-feet, it is disqualified and eliminated from competition. The team of horses that pulls the most weight the farthest distance is the class winner in this elimination competition.

The Michigan Mini Horse Pulling Association began in 2014 and is a sport in which generations of family members participate.

The Mini Horses have been pulling in Oklahoma, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas for approximately 10 years. In the past five years, Mini Horse pulling has became popular in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan.

Showing off

Car Show will offer multiple awards

One of the biggest attractions at the Sumpter Country Fest will once again be the Car Show set for Sunday, May 28.

The cars will be on display at Sumpter Township Hall, 23480 Sumpter Road in Belleville and judges will be taking a look to find the winners in several classes from 9 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Registration is $5 per vehicle and will take place the day of the show from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. and there will be dash plaques for the first 25 entries received.

People's Choice awards will be presented along with awards in eight categories including: Muscle Car; Antique Car; Classic Car; Street Rod; Street Machine; Sports Car; Truck and Motorcycle.

For more information or a registration form, contact Margaret Rochon, (734) 699-5275.

Baby face

The annual baby contest will begin in the pavilion when the festival opens Friday, May 26 and will continue through 1:30 p.m. Monday, May 29. The winner will be announced at 5 p.m. that day. Sponsored again this year by John Hennessey of Hennessey Engineers, Inc. in Southgate, the contest photos will be on display in the pavilion during the festival so visitors can support their favorite baby with a donation or just enjoy viewing the entries this year.

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Hand-made country quilt to be raffled

A tradition of the Sumpter Fest will continue this year with the annual raffle of a handmade quilt donated by Lynne Mills.

Mills, the owner of Lynne's Custom Quilts and Creations in Bitely, grew up in Sumpter Township and her parents, Jim and Joanne Posegay, are long-time members of the Township Parks and Recreation Commission.

Mills began donating the quilts to the festival about 10 years ago in an effort to help generate some funds for the commission. The raffle every year is always very popular and tickets go very quickly.

Mills said that each year, she tries to incorporate the theme of the festival into the quilt which she custom designs and sews. She gathers materials, cuts the quilting pieces and does all the stitching on the creation.

It is, she admitted, time consuming, but this year she received a little help from the community in the form of several donated pieces of material she will use in the "We're Still Country" themed quilt.

"This year, I decided to do a quilt in a vintage patchwork design," she said. "I do not follow a pattern but the idea and design is in my head and I just go from there."

Mills said that each quilt is special to her and that this is a hobby that she really enjoys.

Tickets for the quilt raffle are priced at $1 or six for $5 and will be on sale during the entire weekend festival at the quilt booth.

The winner announced at the close of the event.

We're Still Country

The 2017 Sumpter Country Fest "We're Still Country" theme will be proudly displayed in a photo exhibit in the pavilion during the festival this year. The commission has collected pictures dating from the 1840s to 2017 depicting the "The Evolution of Farming in Sumpter Township". Included will be photos like the one below left which features Ron Lange, Sr., Ron Lange Sr, and Frank Januzick with their combine along with photos of much older machines. The exhibit will also feature a depiction of Sumpter Township, past and present.

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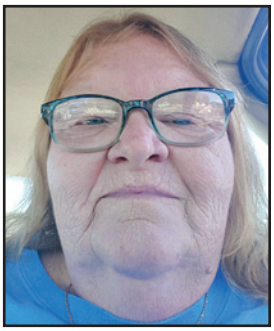
Drusilla Allen

Drusilla Allen is lining up a big event to start the Sumpter Country Fest this year.

Allen, along with the members of the Sumpter Country Fest Committee and the Sumpter Township Parks and Recreation Commission, has organized the annual Country Fest Parade that will begin at noon May 27 at the corner of Judd and Sumpter roads.

Allen, who is the parade chairman, said that the parade will travel south down Sumpter Road from the corner of Judd to Dunn Road and end at the festival grounds.

The theme of the parade, and the festival, this year is We're Still Country, and in addition to the individual category awards this year, a special award will be presented for the best dressed or decorated entry in the parade with the special theme American Heroes.

Allen said the award presentations would take place at about 1:15 at the festival grounds, when the parade is completed.

"We hope everyone will join us," Allen, who is also a member of the Sumpter Township parks and Recreation Commission, said.

She added a special thanks to the parade sponsors this year, Joe Nassar, Little Town Liquor and Deli and Sumpter Pharmacy.

Township Parks are hidden treasures

Graham Park

Graham Park in Sumpter Township is a part of the history of the community.

The park is named for and was dedicated to the memory of Roy Graham, the only Sumpter Township Police officer who lost his life while on duty. The park was originally dedicated to his memory Nov. 6, 1985.

Graham Park

The land for the park was first purchased by the township in November of 1971 under the direction of then Supervisor Elmer Parraghi. The Sumpter Township Parks and Recreation Commission had only been in existence since June of 1970.

The township paid $14,900 for the 10-acres of land on the northwest corner of Sumpter and Wear roads. Township officials named the first park in Sumpter Township Wear Road Park.

A rededication ceremony took place July 24 1993 and a memorial plaque was installed in the park. In 2006, a 20-year memorial ceremony took place attended by Ofc. Graham's family, friends, area police officers, township officials and a crowd of citizens.

Banotai Park

Banotai Park has been an amenity of Sumpter Township since 1978.

Maintenance at the park began in earnest in 1990 when Supervisor Marvin L. Banotai assigned the work to the Parks and Recreation Commission and scheduled several community events in the park. Banotai enlisted the help of the Huron Valley Conservation Club to stock the lake and conduct fishing clinics.

Banotai Park

The park was renamed in 2004 in memory of Mr. Banotai. In 2005, Supervisor Johnny Vawters and the board of trustees agreed to a five-year plan of the Parks and Recreation Commission for improvements at the park. In 2005, more than $40,000 was spent in the park on improvements, maintenance and pavilions. Following those improvements, an official dedication ceremony took place naming the park for Supervisor Banotai and officially naming the body of water Sherwood Pond.

Since then, constant improvements have been made at the park, including wheelchair accessible rest rooms and two fountains.

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